



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# HEROES AMONG US

Long before the month of May was designated "Military Appreciation Month," there was a fifth grader from Martin, South Dakota that was busy demonstrating her commitment to our military personnel by expanding a one-time assignment into an ongoing project.

The Martin fifth grade class was assigned to make Veterans Day cards for the veterans in their community. But this was not enough for Laura Bergman. Laura escalated this assignment into a project entitled "Help Laura Help our Soldiers."

At Christmas time Laura sent 48 cards to soldiers whose names and addresses were given to her by friends. And, while most kids were busy dying Easter eggs, Laura was busy composing 129 Easter holiday messages for the soldiers. Laura plans to continue this holiday project and hopes to grow her mailing list every holiday. Soldiers names and addresses can be sent to her at PO Box 583, Martin, SD 57551.

Laura said, "This is my way of saying 'thank you' for all they do for us and for our country and to let them know somebody cares."

Leo Buscaglia once said, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Our special thanks to Laura for her act of kindness and her commitment to our soldiers. We wish her the best of luck on her project. (Photo courtesy of the Bennett County Booster.)

### *Inside this issue:*

NPS Offers Free Military Passes	2
Aberdeen Stand Down	2
139th Welcomed Home	3
Women Veterans Task Force Draft Plan	4
SDNG Museum Summer Projects	5
Upcoming Events	6



## NPS OFFERS FREE MILITARY PASS

The National Parks Service has announced that effective May 19, a new military pass is available to active duty service members and their families for free. The annual pass will be accepted at all public land sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees, including those managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Corps.

The pass, which normally costs \$80, provides access to sites that charge an entrance or standard amenity fee for one full year. If the park charges a per-vehicle fee, the pass will get the holder and accompanying passengers in for free. The pass also gets the holder and up to three additional adults in for free at parks charging a per-person fee.

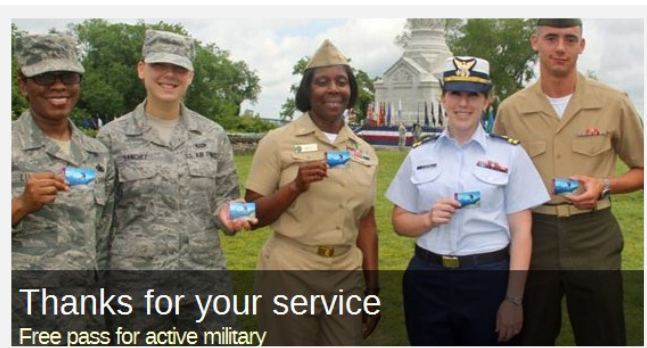
The pass doesn't cover expanded amenity fees, which means costs for activities such as camping or rock climbing.

The pass is generally sold at any site that charges admission. Check out this website to see which parks sell the annual pass (<http://store.usgs.gov/pass/PassIssuanceList.pdf>). Be sure to bring valid military ID cards.

Answers to frequently asked questions can be found at (<http://www.store.usgs.gov/pass/military.html>).

The pass gives active duty service members and their families a chance to visit 2,000 participating parks for free.

More questions — call 1-888-ASK USGS (1-888-275-8747), Ext. 1.



## ABERDEEN STAND DOWN

Community leaders in Aberdeen will be hosting a Stand Down on Tuesday, September 25, from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The Stand Down will be held in conjunction with "Project Connect" and will be held at the Aberdeen Civic Center (203 S. Washington).

Partners within the veteran network that will be assisting with the Stand Down portion of this project are: Brown County Veterans Service Office, VFW Posts, DAV, PVA, Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, Aberdeen VA Clinic (CBOC), SFVAHCS, the SD Department of Veterans Affairs and the Mobile Vet Centers.

The Stand Down provides veterans an opportunity to meet with county, state and federal veteran representatives and discuss benefits and services.

For more information, please contact Liana Claymore, Aberdeen CBOC, 605-229-3500 (Ext. 2254).





## 139TH BSB RETURNS HOME WITH PRIDE

Soldiers of 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, were surrounded by family and friends during their welcome home ceremony Saturday, May 18, at the Swiftel Center in Brookings.

The 139th, comprised of Soldiers from the Brookings, Redfield, Watertown, Miller, Mitchell, Rapid City and Sioux Falls areas, deployed in July for a yearlong mission as a Logistics Task Force to provide supply, maintenance and transportation support to U.S. forces in Iraq and Kuwait in support of Operation New Dawn.

"Less than a year ago we gathered to send these brave men and women away to a distant, foreign land," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard, during the ceremony. "It was a day of great sadness and also great pride. Today, that pride is bursting at the seams and our sadness has been replaced with joy!" Daugaard read a long list of achievements the unit completed that included; 13 forward operating base closures, transportation of 31 million pounds of cargo and 6,500 personnel by land and air, 376 maintenance jobs completed, recovered more than \$315,000 of lost property and more than \$2 million in miss-shipped property, and in one re-supply mission, saved the Joint Task Force \$6 million dollars.

"Our deployment was a resounding success," said Lt. Col. Tony Verchio, 139th Logistics Task Force commander. "It was a level of success in which we should all be proud of these great men and women."

While the leadership praised the 139th for their work during the deployment, they also recognized the support of family and community members. Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG, said the support from the family, friends and employers helped make the mission a success.

"When a unit returns like this it lifts a huge burden from the families left behind," said Reisch. "I want to personally thank the spouses and the family members who have gone a year without the companionship of their Soldier. Your contribution to this deployment was huge."

Sgt. 1st Class Joel Rassel, a mechanic in the 139th from Woonsocket, agreed that family support was a huge factor for him while overseas.

"This ceremony is nice," said Rassel. "We are able to publicly thank our families and friends for all they have done to support us. It's a great ending to a great mission. The Soldiers in this unit put in so much energy and went above and beyond. They deserve some time to get back to their families."



WELCOME HOME



This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave. "Elmer Davis"

# WOMEN VETERANS TASK FORCE DRAFT PLAN RELEASED

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is releasing for public comment a draft of its strategic report to address key issues facing women veterans. The plan outlines steps for improvements to care and services for women veterans that are sustainable, accountable and a part of the department's culture and operations.

Shinseki formed a task force to develop an action plan to address women veterans' issues. Since then, the group has conducted a broad survey of department experts to identify those issues and organize them by priority. The draft report is an interim step prior to VA finalizing its overall plan.

The report comes at an important juncture in VA's history that demands a review of the quality, quantity, and types of services and programs it provides to women veterans. The number of women veterans using VA has increased 83 percent in the past decade, from about 160,000 to over 292,000 between fiscal years 2000 and 2009, compared with a 50 percent increase in men.

Women are now the fastest growing faction within the veteran community. In 2011, about 1.8 million or 8 percent of the 22.2 million veterans were women. The male veteran population is projected to decrease from 20.2 million men in 2010 to 16.7 million by 2020. In contrast, the number of women veterans will increase from 1.8 million in 2011 to 2 million in 2020, at which time women will make up 10.7 percent of the total veteran population.

The VA is training providers in basic and advanced topics in women's health through mini-residencies, and over 1200 providers have currently received training. Comprehensive women's health care can be provided within three different models of care, including comprehensive women's clinics; separate, but shared, space women's clinics; or integrated primary care clinics. All of these clinic models ensure that women receive all of their primary health care (prevention, medical, and routine gynecologic care) by a single primary care provider. A network of medical directors and program managers who coordinate care for women veterans now encompasses all 153 medical centers in the VA Health Care System.

The public notice and instructions for how to submit comments is posted at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). The draft written report will be open for comment for 30 days, and responders will have a number of options to provide both electronic and written feedback. Readers will also be able to participate in a public discussion board on the Internet at: <http://vawomenvetstratplan.uservice.com/forums/159415-general>.

To view the report without making recommendations, please visit VA's website at: [http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/Draft\\_2012\\_Women-Veterans\\_StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/Draft_2012_Women-Veterans_StrategicPlan.pdf).



2012 Report

## Strategies for Serving Our Women Veterans

Department of Veterans Affairs

Women Veterans Task Force



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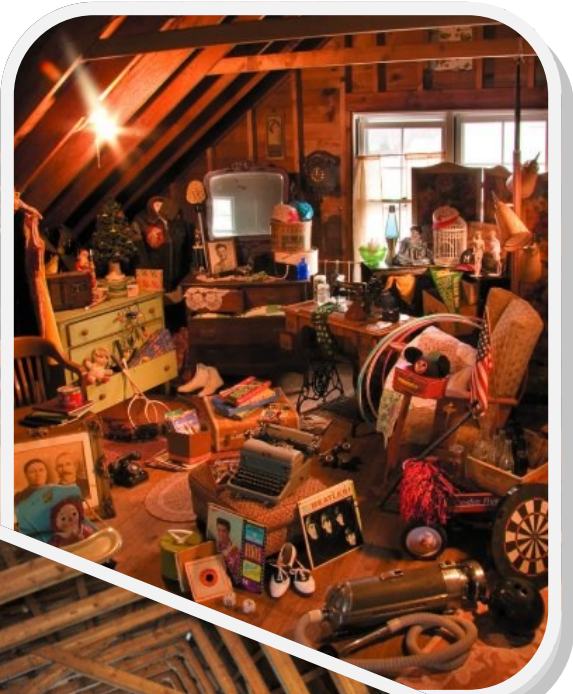
## SDNG MUSEUM EXPANDS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

On most days at the SDNG Museum you will find staff providing tours, redesigning exhibits, and collecting and documenting military artifacts, reports, pictures and memorabilia. But this summer they are embarking on a new venture by inviting the children of the Pierre/Ft. Pierre communities to partake in numerous educational projects.

The Museum, partnering with the Boys and Girls Club, will reach out to over 100 boys and girls in an effort to educate them about the heritage of the South Dakota National Guard; and the significant role they have played throughout South Dakota's history both on federal and state missions.

During the month of June they will be working on the "attic project." Every attic and/or basement is home to many family heirlooms, some of which could be weapons, uniforms, wartime letters and postcards, military pins, flags, medals, newspaper clippings, and other military artifacts. This project will highlight how the riches within the museum relate to families military history. Each student will create their own attic treasure box and will explain the contents within their box.

The month of July students will be studying the history of military aircraft nose art. Loved and hated, photographed and censored, over the years nose art has been a controversial tradition. These students will be provided a historical overview of nose art, they will create their own aircraft, design their artwork and paint their respective artwork on their aircraft. Judging will take place on July 31.



# Upcoming Events

May 28—Memorial Day—State Offices Closed  
May 30—VABHHCS Historic Landmark Presentation—3:00 pm (Hot Springs)  
Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings  
Jun. 7—VABHHCS Stand Down—Pine Ridge  
Jun. 8—SDNG 150-Year Anniversary Open House—11:00 am to 3:00 pm (Camp Rapid)  
Jun. 9—SDNG Museum Anniversary Party—10:00 am—4:00 pm (301 E. Dakota)  
Jun. 9—Marine Corps League Department of SD Convention—Pierre  
Jun. 9-23 Golden Coyote Annual Training Exercise  
Jun. 10-12—Dare to Dream Conference—Spearfish Holiday Inn  
Jun. 13—Veterans Enrollment and Information Fair 1:00 pm—5:00 pm—Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Veterans Service Office (448 West Frontier—Eagle Butte)  
Jun. 14—Flag Day  
Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown  
Jun. 21—Rapid City Homeless Connect  
Jun. 23-24—30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event for the 200th EN/139th BSB—Sheraton—Sioux Falls  
July 11—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 15—Sioux Falls—10:30 am.  
July 21-22—Sioux Falls Air Show  
Jul. 21—SD Convoy of Hope Stand Down—Rapid City  
July 28-29—30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event for the 189th AVN—Rapid City  
Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre  
Aug. 27—VABHHCS Stand Down—Rapid City  
Aug. 29—Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Stand Down—McLaughlin  
Aug. 30—Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Stand Down—Eagle Butte  
Sept. 11—Stand Down—Wagner National Guard Armory—610 E. SD HWY 46 (10:00 am—2:00 pm)  
Sept. 25—Stand Down—Aberdeen Civic Center—203 S. Washington (2:00 pm—7:00 pm)  
Sept. 25 Pierre Homeless Connect

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